

LONE WOLF AND CUB

子連水狼

VOLUME 10

HOSTAGE
CHILD

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA



子連水狼

LONE WOLF AND CUB

子
遠
水
狼

story

KAZUO KOIKE

art

GOSEKI KOJIMA



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lettering & retouch
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editor
MIKE HANSEN
assistant editor
TIM ERVIN
consulting editor
TOREN SMITH for STUDIO PROTEUS
book design
DARIN TABBRICK
art director
MARK COX

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HOSTAGE CHILD

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA

子連れ狼



VOLUME

10

A NOTE TO READERS

Lone Wolf and Cub is famous for its carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

LONE WOLF AND CUB



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the fiftieth

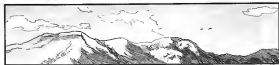
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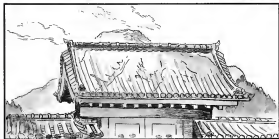
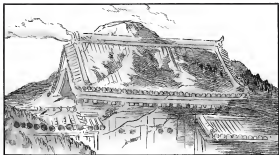
























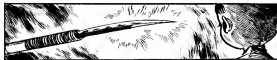




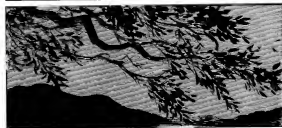


















HEN HEN
 GATHER MOVE,
 OSAMI! IT'S YOU
 PLANNED TO ANNOUNCE
 INTO ACTION BY STEALING
 THE GOLDEN-ARMED, IF YOU
 AND THE YAGYU BATTLE
 TO THE DEATH,
 BLADE WILL
 SPREAD...

...AND YOUR
 CASE WILL REACH
 THE EARS OF THE
 SHOGUN HIMSELF
 IS THAT YOUR
 SCHEME?







TO THE
SECRET OF
THE FURYU EYES,
IN THE GOLD-BAND
I'VE CHECKED THEM
CAREFULLY,
BUT...

GOLD-BAND
COME FROM ALL
SIXTY REGIONS
OF JAPAN AT LEAST
THREE ARIVE
EVERY DAY

A SECRET
CONCEALED IN
ALL THOSE LETTERS
IS NOT EASILY
BROKEN...

THE FURYU
HAVE ALREADY
THE SHOGUN'S
COMMUNICATIONS
FOR THEIR OWN EYES.
THAT MUCH I HAVE
PROVED.

THERE'S
WHY REIGUO'S
USED YOUR
DUEL TO...

HIKARI











THE
KUROGASHIMA
SERVE THE
SHOGUN

YET
NOW YOU
RUN ERRANDS
FOR THE KAMMEI
PATRIOT.



A SHOGUN
IS VERSED IN
SPYCRAFT AND
DEFENSE. A
SHOGUN NEVER
ATTACKS.

EASY
TO WEAVE OUR
STRATAGEMS AND
KILL YOU FROM THE
SHADOWS...BUT THIS
WOULD BRING US
NO HONOR.



WE
ARE HERE
TO AVENGE
OSAMU AND
OUR SLAIN
CLANMEN!

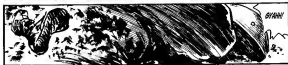
AND THIS
WE ACHIEVE
OURSELVES,
AND MEET YOU
IN FAIR
COMBAT!



FIGHT,
OSAMU! IT'S
TASTE THE
HATRED OF THE
KUROGASHIMA!

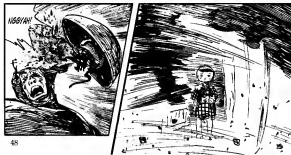


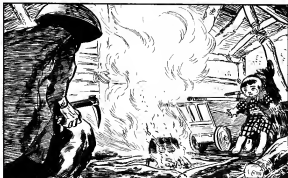




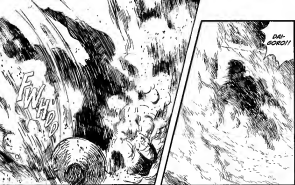








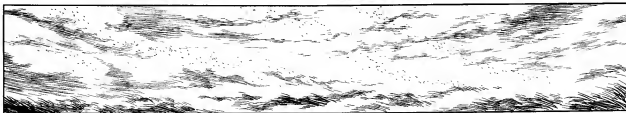


























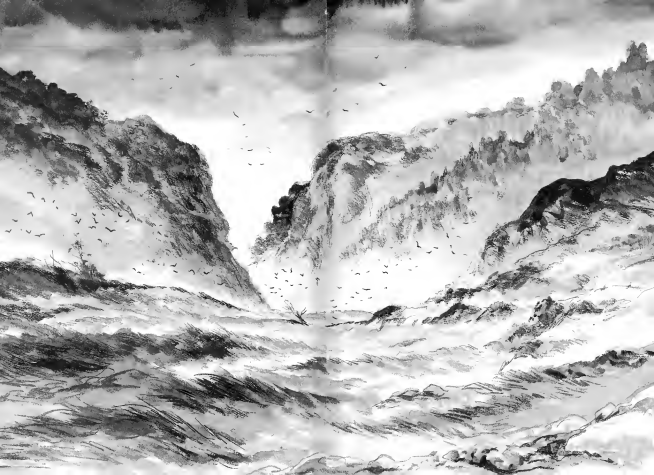


the fifty-first

The Tears of Daigoro













WELL,
DONE.

YOU'VE
CARVED
YOUR PATH
OF BLOOD!



BUT
NOW IT
IS AT AN
END!

YOUR REPENTANCE
RIFLE IS SPENT, YOUR
SACRIFICED SWORD LOST,
YOUR ANGER SHATTERED,
BARE YOUR POTENTIAL!
MUST BE AS NOTHING
AS AN OLD SWAN































HOW
RETRIBUTION!



HOW
LONG DOES
THIS BRAGGER
AND HIS UNGODLY
INTEND TO
LIVE IN
SHAMAZU?

UNTIL
I'VE TORN
YOU PIERCED
UP BY YOUR
ROOTS

THOUGH WE
BECOME DEMONS
OF MISFORTUNE!
THOUGH WE CLAY
FLESH AND DRINK
BLOOD, REDUCED
TO BONES! WE WILL
TRANSGRASP THE
SIX PATHS AND
FOUR LIVES!



THEN
BY THOSE
BONES!

I'LL
LEAD THE
WAY!



SENDING
OUT THE
KURO-
KAMAY!

CALLING
UP THE ANKSHY
OF SHANA AND KURAZU!
WHAT'S THE MATTER,
KESUDO? DO YOU
SO DESIRE YOUR
KURO-KAMAY?



...
...!



I'LL
EXPOSE
THE YAGYU
LETTERS!
I SWEAR!





HEY HEY
HEY...YOU LURE
ME INTO THE LONG
GRASS, TO USE IT
LIKE WATER FOR
YOUR SWORD MOVES-
SLICING STRONG!
HOW AMUSING!



"OBSCURE
THE DISTANCE,
AND STRIKE UP FROM
THE WATERS"...THESE
LITTLE GAMES DON'T
WORK ON ME!



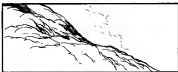
DOES HE
COME FROM
THE RIGHT?...OR
FROM THE LEFT?
IS THAT YOUR
GREAT SWORD
SECRET?













ABOUT
THE BODY?



FIND
IT?

THE
LETTER MUST
BE ON HIM!
GO!

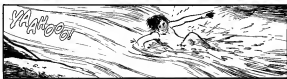


































I HAD
A...
ADVENTURER
CHILD.

HE CAME
INTO THIS WORLD
CLOUDED IN MIND; HE COULD
NOT POSSIBLY UPHOLD THE
FAMILY LINE...YET SO SAYING,
IT WAS NO PARENT'S
RESPONSIBILITY FOR
FATHERING HIM.



THE
POOR
THING...



WHEN WE
LIVED IN TOWN,
THE NEIGHBOR CHILDREN
MOCKED HIM HERCULESSLY.
HE WAS IN TEARS MORNING
TO NIGHT. EVEN FODDERLERS
CALLED HIM "MIDDLE
ROGALL."



HERE WE
COULD LIVE IN
PEACE. FATHER
AND SON. I BEGAN
LEAVE FROM MY LORD,
AND MOVED TO THE
MOUNTAINS.

A PARENT
IS RESPONSIBLE
FOR THE LIFE OF
HIS CHILD. THIS IS
NATURE'S WAY.



YET...IS
IT NOT DISLOYAL
TO PLACE YOUR CHILD
AHEAD OF SERVICE TO
YOUR LORD?

OUR ARMY IS
DESPERATELY
POOR.

BY
TAKING LEAVE
AND FORFEITING
MY ANNUITY, I
REDUCED MY
LORD'S FINANCIAL
BURDEN.



MOR WILL
I LIVE
FOREVER.

WHAT IS
MORE DISLOYAL
THAN MAKING
MY DUTIES TO
SUCH A SON?

I
SEE.

AND THAT
BOY?



YOU
KNOW FAR
BETTER
THAN I?

FROM
THE MOMENT
YOU ENTERED,
YOU'VE POURED
YOUR BLOODLINE
UPON HIM.























the fifty-second

The Fisher- woman's Love

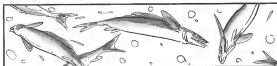
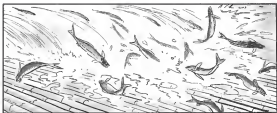


















HE HAD
EATEN NOTHING
FOR A DAY AND
A HALF.



WATER,
ANYTHING
MORE.



LORDY!
WHOSE
LITTLE ONE
IS AMP?



NOON. THE
FIFTH MOON
SINCE HE HAD
LOST HIS
FATHER.









WHAT COULD HE POSSIBLY TELL
THEM...? THAT HE LIVED IN A
WORLD OF SLAUGHTER...? THAT
HE SEARCHED FOR A FATHER
PURSUED BY THE FLASHING
BLADES OF THE FAIRY?...?



THERE WAS NO WHY
HE COULD SPEAK...
NO WHY HE COULD
REACH OUT.



HE WAS STARVING...
AND YET...
HE WAS A BOY
WHO HAD LEARNED
NEVER TO RELY ON
THE KINDNESS OF
STRANGERS.



A CHILD WHO KNEW
ONLY THE REMOTE,
STONY FISH OF HIS
FATHER, AND THOUGHT
THAT SO HE, TOO,
SHOULD LIVE.



TO THE BOY, THE
DANCING SILVER
SCALES ON THE
WATER SEEMED
INFINITELY
PRECIOUS.

SO MANY PEOPLE
HAD SWIFTED SO
LONG AND HARD
TO CATCH THEM,
HE COULD NOT
CONCEIVE OF
TAKING WITHOUT
GIVING IN RETURN.

AND TO THE BOY, THERE
WAS ONLY ONE WAY TO
SAVE LIKE HIS FATHER,
HE MUST PUT HIS LIFE
ON THE LINE.

HE WAS THE SON
OF AN ASSASSIN.
GOLD RECEIVED...
FOR HUMAN LIVES.











SHAA



SHAA

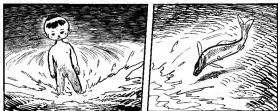
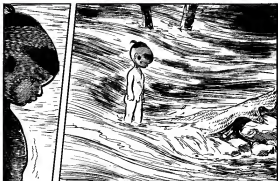


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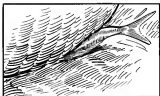


























SWISH-SWASH!
BEYOND
RESTARE!

TERRIFYING
EYES! THE EYES
OF ONE WHO HAD
GAZED UPON HELL
SINCE BIRTH!



THOSE
PUPILS
SO LARGE AND
STILL. THE WHITE
SPREADING OUT
AND DOWN



LIKE THE
EYES OF AN
ADDRESSER,
DEALING AND
ESCAPING DEATH
TOO MANY
TIMES!

TO SEE
SUCH EYES
IN A CHILD! MY
BLOOD RUNS
COLD!

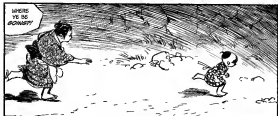
BORN UNDER
STRANGE STARS...
A FEARFUL CHILD!
TWISTING HEAVEN
AND EARTH TOWARD
DESTRUCTION!



OHAN DONG!
I DON'T KNOW
WHERE YOU FOUND
HM, BUT LET HM
GO RIGHT AWAY!

HM-
WHAT DO
YOU...







HOW COME
WHAT YOU'RE
DOING?



LOOK
AT THAT
GREAT BIG
GRIN...



YE HEARD
WHAT YABURE-
SAMA SAYS? WAS
THAT IT? IS THAT
WHY YE WANT

YE DIDNT
WANT TO
CAUSE US NO
TROUBLE...

IS THAT
WHY POOR,
POOR
CHILD...



YOU JUST
COME ON HOME
WITH ABATE. I
WONT GIVE HER
NO NEVER
HAND...











































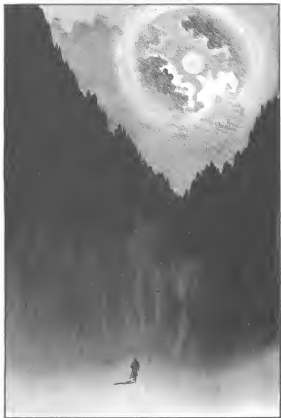




the fifty-third

Drifting Shadows





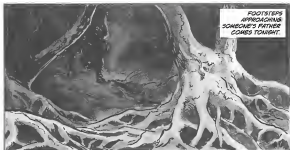


THE GOD OF
DEATH...OF
OVERGROWN
GRAVEYARDS.



THE WOLVES ARE COMING:
LONE WOLF AND GUB.





FOOTSTEPS
APPROACHING.
SOMEONE'S FATHER
COMES TONIGHT.

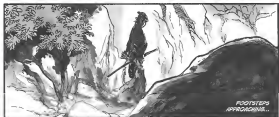


INSECTS SILENCED;
SOMEONE'S FATE
TO DIE THIS NIGHT.

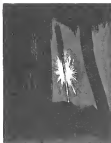


WILD DOGS HOWLING;
SOMEONE'S FATHER
COMES THIS NIGHT.















YES...
NO
DOUBT



THIS MAN
KILLED ONE
AND THOUGH
CUT DOWN
HIMSELF...



...HE THREW
HIS SWORD
AT ANOTHER
CLIMBING FOR
THE DOOR...



THE
YAKU'S ARMOUR
FLEW THEIR
BARRIERS







A MIGHT
FIRE WAS
DANGEROUS.
IT WAS THE SAME
AS ANNOUNCING
HIS LOCATION
TO THE
YABYU

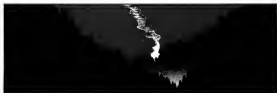


YET HE WAS
A FATHER WHO
FOUNDED JEMPOKINE
IN DEATH ..



...EVEN THOUGH
HE WAS A FATHER
FOR WHOM EVERY
SECOND COUNTED
AS HE SEARCHED
FOR HIS SON.









HE HAD ALSO
GRAVED THE
BODIES OF
THE YASUO
ASSASSINS
THOUGH
MORTAL
SINNERS.
THEY WERE
SOMETIMES
SHAMING.



HE WAS
A FATHER
WHO LIVED
BY THE SIX
PATRIARCHS AND THE
FOUR LADIES. A
FATHER WHO
BELIEVED THAT
THE WARRIOR
SEES LIFE
IN DEATH.







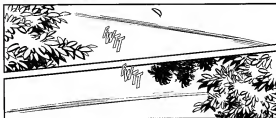












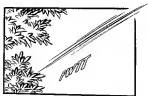


























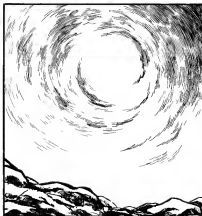






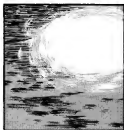


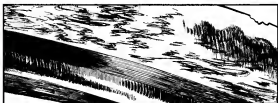
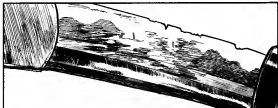


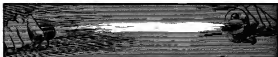




















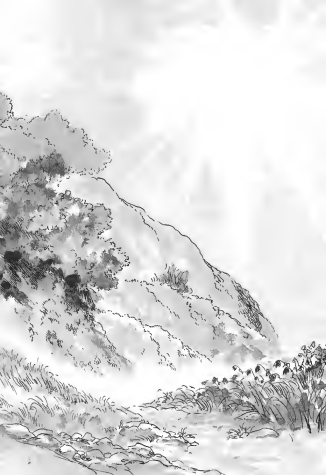


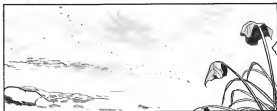
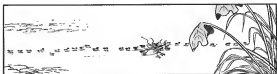


the fifty-fourth

Straw Boy



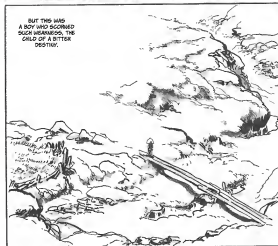


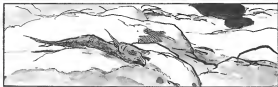
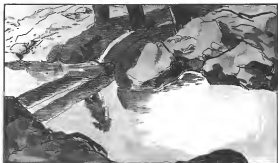














AND
NOW HE HAD
GONE TO THE
END OF HIS
STRENGTH.



EVEN THIS GOLDEN
SUMMER SUNLIGHT, THE
SAUS OF RIPENING RICE, OF
LUSH SUMMER FIELDS...



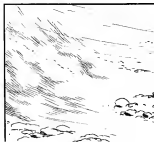
...WAS THE
HERCELESS SLAVE
OF DEATH.

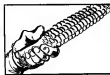


PAPA...

HE WAS
THREE YEARS
OLD...







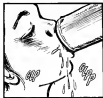


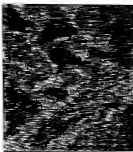
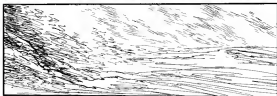




























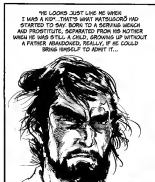




























SO,
BOSS, WHAT
DO WE DO
NOW?



FIRST, WE
RAISE ENOUGH
TO LIVE LOW
FIVE, SIX YEARS,
THEN WE GO TO
SAATH AROUND
KYOTO.

WE GO
STRAIGHT, OPEN
A BUSINESS OR
SOMETHING, LET
THE TALK DIE
DOWN.

BUT EVERY
WAY-STATIOM'S
GRABBLIN' WITH
JIFFY-FOSTER
FOSTER-FOSTER.



YEAH,
WE COULD
USE THE LOOT.
BUT IT'S TOO
RISKY.

THAT'S
WHY WE
BOTH THE
ARMY.



WE
OFF A FEW
FOLK, AND
GET OUTTA
HERE.



DRY
SLEEPING WITH
CORPSES

HE'S
FUCKIN'
FEARLESS...

Wanted!

Bushū
gang leader,
Matsugoro

The famed Matsugoro,
wanted on suspicion of
assembling a gang with intent
to commit breaches and murder.
Consider highly dangerous.
Freed by two convicts while
in transport to jail.

A cash reward
valued at fifty Koku,
for the capture or
information leading
to the capture.

Sampei
Dokurōsho

Shōjima
Ichirōbei



お尋ね手配之事

哉州悪行 松五郎

石老者 野合組なり

徒党も粗み

押込張殺も働

光惡かつ者にて

唐丸運送の途次

王多の仲間即ち得

運亡中の者也

クイ所在も告げ

無し者

並に捕縛せし者

米五十石も

つぎやうなる也

駿府代官所

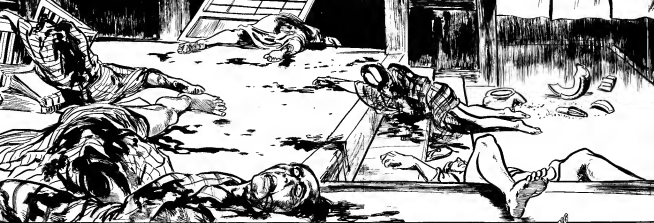
下鳩市郎長衙門













SHIT!

WE'LL
SLIP OUT
THE BACK
AND FOLLOW
THE RIVER.

YOU GUYS
RIGHT? UP
A BOMBY



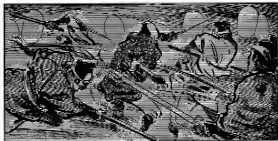


















LOVE WOLF AND GUY BOON TELL THE END
TO BE CONTINUED

GLOSSARY

bushō

Another term for Musashi, the area encompassing most of the Kantō Plain around modern-day Tokyo.

dōtanuki

A battle sword, literally, “sword that cuts through toros.”

gojō-bako

Lacquered, waterproof box used to carry official correspondence between the shōgunate in Edo and its regional officials.

go-yō

Official business. As a lantern carried by the officers of the *dokus* magistrates, the equivalent of today’s national police, or as the shout of the police apprehending a criminal, “go-yō” was one of the most dreaded words in the world of Edo Japan’s criminal elements.

han

A feudal domain.

hanshi

Samurai in the service of a *han*.

honorifics

Japan is a class and status society and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes *o* and *go*, and a wide range of suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Love Wolf and Cuckoo*

dono – archaic; used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures

sama – used for superiors

jitte-mon

A policeman. The street cops of the Edo period carried *jitte*, a specialized weapon about 18 inches long, with no cutting edge — just two prongs designed to catch and snap off an opponent’s sword blade.

jizō

Local deities, represented by simple stone statues by the roadside. Often decorated with red cloth bibs.

Kantō

Literally, “east of the gate.” Eastern Japan, north of the mountain chain around Mount Fuji, especially the region around Edo, present-day Tokyo.

kenkyaku

Swordsmen, *kenshi*.

koku

A bale of rice. The traditional measure of a *han*’s wealth, a measure of its agricultural land and productivity.

Kyoto shoshidai

The shōgun’s emissary to the Imperial Court in Kyoto. Although real power lay with the shōgun in Edo, the shōgunate maintained the fiction that the emperor was the

ultimate authority in Japan. The *shōshiki* maintained contact with the imperial household and the aristocracy and oversaw tax collection and other *shōgunate* business in the old capital.

meifumadō

The Buddhist Hell. The way of demons and damnation.

nagamaki

A two-handed weapon taller than a man, with a long, curved blade.

ri

Old unit of measurement. Approximately 4 kilometers (2.5 miles).

rōnin

A masterless samurai. Literally, "one adrift on the waves." Members of the samurai caste who have lost their masters through the dissolution of *han*, expulsion for misbehavior, or other reasons. Prohibited from working as farmers or merchants under the strict Confucian caste system imposed by the Tokugawa *shōgunate*, many impoverished *rōnin* became "hired guns" for whom the code of the samurai was nothing but empty words.

sakki

The palpable desire to kill, directed at another person. Sometimes called blood lust. Based on the concept of *ki*, or energy, found in spiritual practices and Japanese martial arts like Aikido. These body energies can be felt beyond the

physical self by the trained and self-aware.

sekisho

Checkpoint regulating travel from Edo to other parts of the country. All travelers had to submit papers at official checkpoints along the main highways in and out of Edo.

shinobi

A generic term for ninja, meaning "one who moves in secrecy." Ninja had their heyday in the time of warring states before the rise of the Tokugawa clan. Originally mercenaries serving different warlords, by the Edo period they were in the service of the central government. The most famous *shinobi* were the ninja of Iga and Kaga, north of Kyoto. The Kurokuwa that appear in *Lost Wolf and Cub* were officially the laborers and manual workers in Edo Castle. Whether they truly served as a secret spy corps is lost in history.

yakuza

Japan's criminal syndicates. In the Edo period, *yakuza* were a common part of the landscape, running houses of gambling and prostitution. As long as they did not overstep their bounds, they were tolerated by the authorities, a tradition little changed in modern Japan.

zanbatō

The mythical horse-slicing stroke used by Ōgami Ittō.

KAZUO KOIKE

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing the successful *Love Wolf and Cub* and *Crying Freeman* manga, Koike has hosted television programs; founded a gothic magazine; produced movies; written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays; and mentored some of Japan's best manga talent.

Love Wolf and Cub was first serialized in Japan in 1970 (under the title *Kozure Ōkami*) in *Manga Action* magazine and continued its hugely popular run for many years, being collected as the stories were published, and reprinted worldwide. Koike collected numerous awards for his work on the series throughout the next decade. Starting in 1972, Koike adapted the popular manga into a series of six films, the *Baby Cart Animate* saga, garnering widespread commercial success and critical acclaim for his screenwriting.

This wasn't Koike's only foray into film and video. In 1996, *Crying Freeman*, the manga Koike created with artist Ryōichi Ikegami, was

produced in Hollywood and released to commercial success in Europe and is currently awaiting release in America.

And to give something back to the medium that gave him so much, Koike started the *Getiga Senjaku*, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists — such as *Ranma 1/2* creator Rumiko Takahashi — break into the comics field.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to character is clear: "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven this philosophy true.



GOSEKI KOJIMA

Goseki Kojima was born on November 3, 1928, the very same day as the godfather of Japanese comics, Osamu Tezuka. While just out of junior high school, the self-taught Kojima began painting advertising posters for movie theaters to pay his bills.

In 1950, Kojima moved to Tokyo, where the postwar devastation had given rise to special manga forms for audiences too poor to buy the new manga magazines. Kojima created art for *kami-shibub*, or “paper-play” narrators, who would use manga story sheets to present narrated street plays. Kojima moved on to creating works for the *kashi-bon* market, bookstores that rented out books, magazines, and manga to mostly low-income readers. He soon became highly popular among *kashi-bon* readers.

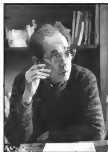
In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market with his series *Deynoki*. As the manga magazine market grew and diversified, he turned out a steady stream of popular series.

In 1970, in collaboration with Kazuo Koike, Kojima began the work that would seal his reputation, *Årrier*

Årrier (*Love Wolf and Gab*). Before long the story had become a gigantic hit, eventually spinning off a television series, six motion pictures, and even theme-song records. Koike and Kojima were soon dubbed the “golden duo” and produced success after success on their way to the pinnacle of the manga world.

When *Manga Japan* magazine was launched in 1994, Kojima was asked to serve as consultant, and he helped train the next generation of manga artists.

In his final years, Kojima turned to creating original graphic novels based on the movies of his favorite director, Akira Kurosawa. Kojima passed away on January 5, 2000 at the age of 71.



THE RONIN REPORT

by Tim Ervin

Lone Wolf and Cub in Film, Part 1

Sword of Vengeance

Note: this is not a review, but a discussion piece. If you haven't seen this movie yet, read only the first two paragraphs. The rest might spoil your movie watching experience.

As Lone Wolf and Cub swept Japan in a wave of black-ink blood, a series of films and television programs followed closely in its tide. While the manga these were based on is indisputably a masterpiece, not all of the live-action adaptations were as great. Only two years after the manga

began its serialization, the first of a six-movie set, known as the “Baby Cart” series, hit the screens in Japan. These films were the cream of the *Lone Wolf* crop, with screenplays by creator Kazuo Koike, graceful direction by Kenji Misumi, consistent acting by Wakayama Tomisaburo as Ogami Itto, and a well-cast Akihiro Tomikawa as Daigoro. Amazingly, the six films in the series were produced within a five-year time frame. Kojima’s scripts, cut-and-pasted packages of important elements and pertinent scenes from the manga, form a condensed universe of Ogami’s Japan. Visually, the comic book translates easily to the director’s eye, owing to artist Goseki Kojima’s cinematic style. *Lone Wolf and Cub* reads like a monument to film, with repeating frames, extremely graceful timing, and similar framing compositions and patterns.

Though comic books and film share many aesthetic similarities, it is difficult to successfully adapt a comic book to film, as it usually involves significant trimming and changing the plot to fit the short attention span of movie watchers, who expect to be engaged by an entire story within two hours. Conversely, comics readers often desire lengthy narratives to justify the cover price (or at least they should). That said, the film adaptations of the “Baby Cart” series were up against tough odds, but they turned out to be pretty darn good. This is at least partly attributed to the amount of film afforded by its serialization. But certainly, the films themselves stand on their own and hand-feed the viewer a serious dose of drama, honor, beauty, and profuse, squirting blood.

The first film in the series, *Sword of Vengeance* (the pre-translated Japanese title is closer to “Son for Hire, Sword for Hire”), starts in a very respectful manner,

with the beheading of the young lord from the manga story "The White Path Between the Rivers." From the first moment, the avid reader will notice how well the movie was put together. The sets are lovingly recreated, the pace and emotion fits the original text, and many of the characters are faithfully depicted. However, in an abrupt departure, a retainer of the young lord, not Ogami, as in the original story, tenderly instructs him on the ceremonial placement of the fan against his abdomen. With one minor plot modification, the ironic juxtaposition of tenderness and violence that is central to Ogami's character is lost. The overall theme of Ogami's inner conflict, with everyone he respects questioning his path and being cut down in the process, is central to the book's story. This deletion affects the viewer's perception. Ogami comes across more as a heartless servant of an evil master. This sentiment continues throughout the movie as Wakayama

Tomisaburo, playing a scruffy and stoic Ogami, travels the byways of feudal Japan. In a short period of contextual narration, the shogunate takes the center stage to become the evil organization with Retsudo Yagyu at the helm. Then, in keeping with Koike's narrative style, the story breaks to the present, as Ogami and Daigoro wander the countryside together, pushing an excellent reconstruction of the infamous baby cart, complete with spring-loaded pole arms and "son for hire, sword for hire" flag. The countryside scenery is captivating, the music is emotionally moving, and a terribly rough samurai with his incredibly darling son are rolling across the lush landscape. Koike took the time to include a scene where Daigoro suckles at the breast of an unknown woman, but damn the limits of film for reducing the context of that breast to a crazy woman in the street. For some reason, having the breast belong to a fighting sister of a Yakuza clan

("Baby Cart on the River Styx," Vol. 1) made the scene in the comic book more resonant. Still, this is an important cue to Ogami's logical tenderness, and it's a good thing that Kotke kept this detail in the film. The pace of the film is contemplative, maybe too much for American audiences, but fans of *Lone Wolf and Cub*'s somber gait might appreciate the breathing room. This slow movement shows respect for time, and the scattered sword battles in the film seem more urgent in comparison.

Like the comic book, the story flashes back periodically, but the only clues to the switch seem to be costume and set changes. For the non-reader, this could make it seem like Ogami is dressed as a bum during the day, then cleaning up and going home at night. This is due in part to another deviation from the original story. In the part of the movie that would

encompass the story “The White Path Between the Rivers,” Daigoro is an infant when his mother is cut down by the Ura-Yagyu. Though it’s understandable that a director would accelerate Daigoro’s age to bridge the book’s time gap, it takes longer to perceive the flashback effect. Fortunately, this is easy to overlook. As for the rest of this important, contextual chunk of movie, the details are exquisite. The priest bells carried by the Yagyu ninja have a terrifying ring, the *ihai* set-up is arranged with precision, and the setting of the river duel is picture-perfect, as if that very location was the inspiration for Kojima’s art.

Technically, the movie is superb. The atmosphere is airy and tense, and the camera movements lend generously to the tone of the story. The sword fights are brief and violent, with gallons of projectile blood squirting off in every direction, a fitting testimony

to Kojima's intense storyboards. The bloodshed is ample, and some of the special effects are remarkable. At one point a man slowly separates into halves after a decisive stroke by Wakayama's Ogami. In some ways, the distracting gore makes up for a lack of sword skill by some of the actors; it would be difficult for all of the actors to wield swords and spears with the idealized grace of Kojima's panels. But after watching a gaggle of Hong Kong sword movies, you might feel slighted by the choreography in *Sword of Vengeance*. Another observable oddity occurs in the film's soundtrack. In a few scenes that take place during one hell of a rainstorm, the audio drops when the dialogue pauses, as if it's only raining when someone is speaking. This was likely done to reduce the overall noise, but the attenuation is very dramatic and comes off sounding absurd and unnatural.

As the backing plot for this film, Ogami is hired to infiltrate a gang of ronin and kill a corrupt lord. At this point, the story “Wings to the Bird, Fangs to the Beast” (Vol. 1) smoothly converges with the general plot. Again, the movie remains faithful to Kojima’s art: the setting of the bath town is exquisite; the people cast as the prisoners to the gang of ruffians are perfectly attired and act their parts like they’re reading from the book; the honorable, defiant, public sex scene is left intact, and provides the director with another of at least three opportunities to expose a woman’s breasts. And, let’s be blunt here for a moment, despite its wrappings of honor and skill and humanity and corruption, *Lone Wolf and Cub* also uses liberal amounts of violence and sexiness to drive interest in the story, and the film uses the same elements to entertain and engage.

In some ways, moving pictures can tease out new elements and angles, and bring a greater context to a preexisting story. When done right, comics-to-film adaptations (and vice versa) can turn out great. Unfortunately, often one medium can't afford to adapt fully to the other, but the "Baby Cart" series is a fine example of doing it right — well, at least so far. This is just the first film of the six-film series, and there are five more to watch. But since the films were all created in such a short period of time, there's a good chance they'll share similar production qualities. At any rate, for the dedicated *Lone Wolf and Cub* reader, it's simply a delight to see elements of these great stories depicted so well on film, and for those who study popular media in general, the "Baby Cart" series is both a successful comics-to-film transfer, and an exhibit of the similarities between the two.



The six paths and four lives are split asunder, as Ōgami Itto and Daigoro tumble apart. Sworn enemy Yagyu Retsudo pursues the Lone Wolf to retrieve a secret communiqué stolen from him, only to watch dozens of his men fall victim to Lone Wolf's hungry sword. Father and son must search for one another as their separate paths echo with poetry and quiet tragedy. With Yagyu's henchmen hunting high and low for both of them, the net drags closer and the danger wraps tighter, but the blood flows ever freely.

"Lone Wolf and Cub is one of those rare achievements in comics, a perfectly crafted story equal parts epic and intimate. Truly awe-inspiring."

— Brian Michael Bendis
writer, *Ultimate Spider-Man*, *Daredevil*

■ EISNER AWARD WINNER

■ HARVEY AWARD WINNER

GRAPHIC NOVEL / MANGA



Front cover illustration
by FRANK MILLER
and LYNN VARLEY

子連水狼